

GCE AS and A Level Subject Criteria for Religious Studies

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The criteria

Introduction

AS and A level subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all AS and A level specifications in a given subject.

They provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the specification.

Aims and objectives

1. Religion and religions (past and present) represent diverse forms of values, beliefs and practices as responses to questions of ultimate meaning and purpose. Religious studies therefore encompasses a wide range of disciplines and can consist of different approaches to their study.
2. AS and A level specifications in religious studies should encourage learners to:
 - develop their interest in and enthusiasm for a rigorous study of religion and relate it to the wider world;
 - treat the subject as an academic discipline by developing knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to a specialist study of religion;
 - adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion;
 - reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their learning.

Subject content

3. Previous study of religious studies should not be a requirement.

Knowledge, understanding and skills

4. AS specifications should offer learners the opportunity to study one or more of the following areas in relation to one or more religions:
 - religious texts;
 - theological studies;

- development of religious tradition(s);
 - religious practice;
 - religion and ethics;
 - philosophy of religion;
 - anthropology, psychology and sociology of religion;
 - religion in contemporary society.
5. Learners should be able to focus on a single area of study, a combination of two areas, or adopt an interdisciplinary approach which combines a variety of areas of study. Specifications should ensure that each approach is of comparable demand.
6. Within the chosen area(s) of study, learners should acquire knowledge and understanding of:
- the key concepts (for example religious beliefs, teachings, doctrines, principles, ideas and theories), including how these are expressed in texts, writings and/or other forms and practices;
 - major issues and questions (for example issues of commonality and diversity, the role of dialogue, methods of study, relevance to contemporary society);
 - the contribution of significant people, traditions or movements;
 - religious language and terminology;
 - the relationship between the area(s) of study and other aspects of human experience.
7. Through the chosen area(s) of study, learners should be able to:
- reflect on, select and deploy specified knowledge;
 - identify, investigate and analyse questions and issues arising from the course of study;
 - interpret and evaluate religious concepts, issues, ideas, the relevance of arguments and the views of scholars;

- use appropriate language and terminology in context;
 - communicate using reasoned arguments substantiated by evidence;
 - make connections between the area(s) of study and other aspects of human experience.
8. In addition, A level specifications should require learners, for their chosen area(s) of study, to:
- demonstrate a wider range and greater depth of knowledge, understanding and skills;
 - show a greater maturity of thought and expression;
 - explore the connections between elements of the area(s) of study, and with other aspects of human experience.

Assessment objectives

9. All learners must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. At A level, learners are required to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in greater depth and over a wider range of content than at AS level.
10. Knowledge, understanding and skills are closely linked. Specifications should require that learners demonstrate the following assessment objectives in the context of the content prescribed.
11. The weighting for AO2 at A level must not be lower than that for AS. The assessment objectives apply to the whole specification as appropriate.
12. The most able learners will also apply and communicate effectively their knowledge and understanding using the skills of critical analysis, evaluation creativity and synthesis.

Assessment objectives		Weightings		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	<p>Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study</p>	65–75%	55–65%	60–70%
AO2	<p>Critically evaluate and justify a point of view through the use of evidence and reasoned argument</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to aspects of human experience</p>	25–35%	35–45%	30–40%

Scheme of assessment

Internal assessment

13. Assessment must be entirely through external assessment.

Synoptic assessment

14. All A level specifications should include synoptic assessment at A2 to test the learners' understanding of the connections between the different elements of the subject and their holistic understanding of the subject. Synoptic assessment should relate to both assessment objectives. The definition of synoptic assessment in the context of religious studies is as follows:

- Synoptic assessment assesses the learners' knowledge and understanding of different elements of the area(s) of study selected and connections between them. It draws together knowledge, understanding and skills learnt in different elements of the A level course. It should also contribute to the assessment of the skill of relating such connections to aspects of human experience.
- Examples of synoptic assessment might include requiring a learner, across a specified area or areas of study, to:
 - reflect on, select and deploy specified knowledge, and identify, investigate and analyse questions arising;
 - interpret and evaluate religious concepts, issues, ideas, the relevance of arguments and the views of scholars;
 - use appropriate language and terminology in context;
 - draw together knowledge, understanding and skills learnt throughout the course to tackle an issue that is new to them;
 - communicate with reasoned arguments substantiated by evidence.

AS performance descriptions for religious studies

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2
Assessment objectives	<p>Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples, and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study.</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements</p>	<p>Critically evaluate and justify a point of view through the use of evidence and reasoned argument.</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to aspects of human experience.</p>
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) select accurate and relevant material; b) explain clearly relevant features or key ideas, supported by examples and/or sources of evidence; c) use accurately a range of technical language and terminology; d) show evidence of being familiar with issues raised by relevant scholars, or a variety of views, where appropriate. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) construct a coherent and well-organised argument supported by examples and/or sources of evidence; b) identify strengths and weaknesses of the argument; c) use accurate and fluent expression.

<p>E/U boundary performance descriptions</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) select limited but relevant material; b) show basic understanding of relevant features or key ideas, supported by occasional examples and/or sources of evidence; c) show limited accurate use of technical language and terminology. 	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate minimal organisation and/or limited coherence; b) offer mainly descriptive answers with little argument, justification or evaluation; c) use language and expression that lacks precision.
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A2 performance descriptions for religious studies

	Assessment objective 1	Assessment objective 2
Assessment objectives	<p>Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples, and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study.</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study.</p>	<p>Critically evaluate and justify a point of view through the use of evidence and reasoned argument.</p> <p>In addition, for synoptic assessment, A level learners should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to aspects of human experience.</p>
A/B boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) address the question specifically and select relevant material; b) deploy comprehensive and mostly accurate knowledge, expressed lucidly; c) use a range of technical language and terminology accurately and consistently; d) competently explain appropriate examples and/or relevant sources/scholars. <p>In addition, for the synoptic assessment, learners</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) construct a coherent and well-organised evaluative argument; b) demonstrate an informed viewpoint and evidence of own thinking within the context of understanding different arguments and views; c) use proficient, fluent and accurate language. <p>In addition, for the synoptic assessment, learners show competent analysis of the nature of connections between elements of their course of study, their broader context and aspects of human experience.</p>

	perform at this level in relation to connections between different elements of their course of study.	
E/U boundary performance descriptions	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) select limited but relevant material; b) deploy limited knowledge, some of which is accurate; c) show limited accurate or consistent use of technical terms; d) demonstrate basic understanding of key ideas, making occasional reference to examples and sources of evidence. <p>In addition, for the synoptic assessment, learners perform at this level in relation to connections between different elements of their course of study.</p>	<p>Learners characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate minimal organisation and/or limited coherence; b) demonstrate few personal insights, or little convincing argument or justification of a point of view with minimal evaluation; c) use language and expression that lacks precision. <p>In addition, for the synoptic assessment, learners show limited analysis of the nature of connections between elements of their course of study, their broader context and aspects of human experience.</p>

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